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NY Times Expose: CIA Fights Russia – Trump's Peace Deal Runs on Illusion

The Duality of U.S.-Ukraine Relations

A recent investigative report has detailed the complex and often contradictory relationship between the Trump administration and the Ukrainian government. While public interactions were characterized by tension and perceived pressure on President Zelensky, a parallel and highly secretive narrative was unfolding behind the scenes. While President Trump appeared to publicly defer to Vladimir Putin and hesitated to implement official sanctions on Russian energy or banking sectors, he privately sanctioned aggressive intelligence operations.

The Secret Drone Campaign and the Role of the CIA

With the blessing of the White House, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the U.S. military "supercharged" a campaign of Ukrainian drone strikes. This operation specifically targeted Russian oil facilities and tankers with the intent to undermine the Russian war machine. This secret partnership persisted even when official military channels faced friction; for instance, while some military aid was frozen in early 2025, CIA Director Ratcliffe successfully advocated for continued intelligence sharing to protect officers on the ground and maintain offensive pressure.

The strategy utilized a refined tactical approach. Rather than relying on high-profile weapons like ATACMS, which had been restricted to avoid escalation, the U.S. provided targeting intelligence for Ukrainian-made drones. CIA experts identified the "Achilles' heel" of Russian refineries—specific couplers that are extremely difficult to repair or replace—allowing strikes to knock facilities offline for weeks at a time.

Leverage, Deniability, and Economic Impact

President Trump reportedly praised these surreptitious operations during private meetings, noting that they provided him with strategic leverage and deniability while dealing with the Russian president. Intelligence estimates suggested the energy strikes cost the Russian economy up to $75 million per day, with additional authorizations allowing for strikes against "shadow fleet" vessels in the Black Sea and Mediterranean.

However, the sources suggest these figures may be optimistic. Although logistical issues briefly caused gas lines in Russia, the country maintains refining capacity well beyond its domestic needs. When compared to Russia’s total annual energy revenue of $110–150 billion, the daily damages are viewed by some analysts as insufficient to force a total Russian surrender.

The Failure of Land-Swap Proposals

Diplomatic efforts to end the conflict have often been based on "illusions" regarding what the Russian side is willing to concede. One proposed "two-plus-two plan" involved Russia withdrawing from Zaporizhzhia and Kherson in exchange for Ukraine relinquishing Donetsk and Luhansk. President Putin rejected this land swap.

Subsequent claims of a "breakthrough" emerged regarding a "three-plus-two plan," where Russia would keep Crimea, its currently occupied territories, and the balance of Donetsk. However, the

sources highlight a significant legal hurdle: Vladimir Putin is a trained jurist, and the regions of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk have been formally integrated into the Russian constitution. Under Russian law, the president does not have the authority to overrule the constitution to cede these territories.

Conclusion

The current U.S. peace process appears to be operating at cross-purposes with secret intelligence activities. While the Trump administration seeks a negotiated settlement, the CIA continues to facilitate direct strikes on Russian infrastructure. The sources conclude that Russia is unlikely to accept the conditions the U.S. is attempting to impose, especially as they remain fully aware of the ongoing clandestine operations against them.

This strategy of maintaining public diplomacy while conducting secret attacks is like a poker player who tries to bluff a win at the table while his partner is caught trying to pick the opponent's pocket; it creates immediate friction and makes a genuine, lasting agreement nearly impossible to reach.